

NEWS

From Supervisor Bill Postmus First District, San Bernardino County



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
December 3, 2002

For information, contact
Brad Mitzelfelt (909) 387-4830

YOUTH ASSESSMENT/TREATMENT CENTER TO OPEN IN HESPERIA

HESPERIA – Thanks to agreements with the County of San Bernardino, VisionQuest Lodgemakers, a youth services organization with 30 years of experience in the childcare field, will mark the beginning of construction Thursday of a youth residential assessment and treatment center in Hesperia. A groundbreaking ceremony will be held at 10 a.m. at the southwest corner of Lemon and "C" Streets.

The center will be named The Fred D. Jones Youth Center. Jones, 79, is a living member of an all-African-American unit in the Army during World War II. Members of the all-African-American Army units, known as "Buffalo Soldiers," were historically instrumental in the settlement of the American West. VisionQuest youth and staff are well known for their re-enactments of Buffalo Soldier life and events. Fred D. Jones is a member of the VisionQuest Lodgemakers Board of Directors and resides in Los Angeles.

The 144-bed facility will provide a place where children referred by San Bernardino County Juvenile Court can be assessed and treated. Young people will stay at the facility for a period of two weeks to several months, depending on their needs and intended direction after discharge. Traditional components of VisionQuest treatment programs will be offered to youth at the Center such as outdoor activities. Professional childcare workers will provide close supervision 24 hours a day. There will be an on-site school at the Center operated by the San Bernardino County Superintendent of Schools. VisionQuest will also be delivering mental health services at the Center under a contract with the San Bernardino County Department of Behavioral Health.

The Center is being developed in response to a request for proposals approved by the County Board of Supervisors and issued by the Probation Department. On January 15, 2002, the Board of Supervisors unanimously approved a 10-year contract

-more-

ASSESSMENT CENTER 2-2-2-2

with VisionQuest that brought the project to life. Such a private-provider contract represents one component of a "Sufficiency Plan" approved by the Board of Supervisors and the State Department of Corrections in response to severe overcrowding of County juvenile assessment and placement facilities.

The Center promises substantial economic benefits for the High Desert community in the areas of employment, construction and ongoing support services. VisionQuest's total annual payroll will eventually exceed \$4.5 million and expenditures for ancillary services to support the operation of the facility are expected to exceed \$3.5 million annually. The program is expected to bring an estimated 150 new jobs for the High Desert region. The 65,000-square-foot center will reside on 10 acres and will cost about \$5 million.

"This facility will not only help provide positive direction to youth in our community—it will also provide many private-sector jobs to strengthen our local economy," said San Bernardino County First District Supervisor Bill Postmus. Postmus added that there are additional benefits to the private construction project including financial, construction and labor-cost efficiencies.

"It's good for County taxpayers and it's good for the City of Hesperia that this project is underway," Postmus said.